

## **Update on behalf of the Trustees of The Hut, the Trustees of the Reading Room and the partners of Dorking Medical Practice.**

I last reported through Westcott Village Magazine in August 2020 on the progress which the plans to provide the village with a new Village Hall and a new Doctors' Surgery had made. Since then, Covid has seen to it that much of life has stood still and, in the light of the latest lockdown just announced, the magazine will not be published for the next couple of months. So, as best we can, we are using other available channels to communicate with the village.

The good news is that the NHS decision making machinery has agreed that there is a demonstrated clinical need for Westcott to retain a surgery. My thanks go to all those who participated in the survey which Dorking Medical Practice launched with the help of the Westcott '*Patient Participation Group*' and to the doctors for their tenacity in pressing the case with the NHS, which should shortly receive official sign-off. This is not entirely scientific, but one of the most persuasive arguments which I heard for building a new surgery in Westcott is that the incremental expense to the NHS of funding the lease costs for a new building over and above Riverbank Surgery are not much more than the costs to the NHS of mending one broken hip. How many of those might we have every year if Westcott patients were needing to travel to Dorking or elsewhere to get to see their doctor?

The next formal steps in this process remain (i) merging The Hut and The Reading Room into one structure which will operate as Westcott Village Hall Trust CIO and (ii) making application for planning permission for what is intended to be built. As a preliminary step, we recently undertook a geo-technical survey of The Hut to establish site conditions. Apologies to any of you who were inconvenienced by the parking restrictions which were needed briefly just before Christmas, but the drilling operations were completed inside a day and we now await the findings of the laboratory analysis of the core soil samples which were extracted.

As soon as Covid restrictions allow we will hold meetings in the village to approve the constitutional changes which will be needed to complete the merger. We have liaised closely with the Charity Commission in recent weeks, and their view remains that the objectives of The Hut and of The Reading Room are sufficiently alike, subject to compliance with regulatory formalities, to be operated as one entity serving the needs of the village as they have evolved over time. We will publish detailed merger proposals as soon as we can and will of course provide a means for any concerns to be raised, but if anyone would like to make representations now then please do so via [comments@westcottvillagehall.com](mailto:comments@westcottvillagehall.com).

Once we have the full results of the geo-technical survey at The Hut, we intend to appoint a professional Project Manager to guide us through the planning application stage and to act as the coordinator of the many processes involved in realising this ambitious project for the village. The doctors' architects have started work on lay-out plans for a building on part of The Hut site with two consulting rooms, a further treatment room, a dispensary and the usual reception/toilet/storage facilities which will be needed, plus on-site car-parking. The two sets of trustees are working on the

design for a new village hall building. They are taking guidance and inspiration from what other villages have achieved, and can run sustainably from income derived from regular users, functions and clubs. Once we have proper schematics on both buildings, which will take a while yet, we will publish these for consultation with the village and then proceed to apply for planning permission.

**Bernd Ratzke**

Chairman, Joint Working Party

6 January 2021

